

Judge Furman:

As an advocate and high school teacher, I have written many letters. All difficult, all necessary, yet none as difficult as this. I am writing to request leniency on behalf of Mr. David Carlebach, a man I have known all my life. A man I greatly respect, who acted in capacity as a mentor for me and essentially guided me on my path to journalism and then education. I am asking you to have mercy with his sentencing, if not for his sake, then for the sake of his daughters. Michal, whom was and is my best friend from childhood; and the twins Chayna and Chuma, whom I have known all my life.

I am typing slowly, Your Honor, my fingers hovering over the keyboard in uncertainty, when they are used to flying, beating a staccato rhythm as the keys are pressed. There is so much to say, and yet I don't know how to say it. I am afraid I may say too much, I am afraid I may say too little.

Your Honor, I don't know where to begin. So I will take the advice I give my students when they struggle with an assignment: Write what you know. Write from the heart.

My name is Sarah Buzaglo, and I just turned 27. I currently teach English Language Arts in the NYC public school system as well as ELA and College and Career Guidance at Bnot Chaya Academy, an alternative high school program for kids at risk.

My parents befriended David Carlebach and his wife as a young married couple. They lived together in the same building, Michal's mom and my mom gave birth in the same hospital, Michal and I attended the same schools and community functions, and our families often gathered for summer BBQ's and holiday meals. My earliest memory of David is when I jumped on the white leather couch in a poufy princess *Purim* costume as he handed my [REDACTED] Shlomo, candies before playing the guitar for our families.

Many days after school I would take the bus go to Michal's house, where we would run to her attic room, dump our book bags on the carpeted floor, and sit in happy silence tackling the library books piled against her wall. She loved the *Babysitter's Club*, I preferred *Nancy Drew* detective novels. As the years passed, our lives changed but my close friendship with Michal did not. We still frequented the public library and each other's homes, but now, Michal worried about her parent's relationship, [REDACTED] and about her uncertainty with career choice. I worried about my brother Shlomo [REDACTED] with psychosis and hospitalized for three months. We both worried about [REDACTED] who weren't calling; and how our parents were feeling pained that we were left single while their friends kids were on their second and third marriages.

Part of the reason I didn't marry immediately is that I was a non-conformist interested in pursuing a career as a journalist. The problem was that my traditional Mideastern parents ascribed to a more traditional route. In their eyes a good girl's main goal in life is to marry, and raise the next generation. My father and I clashed often. I spent many nights crying, and many Sabbath afternoons holed up in Michal's room, talking about how unfair it was that my brother could do as he wished but I could not; that as a 21 year old I had a 10:00pm curfew; that my only career options were speech therapist or teacher. It was one of these Sabbath afternoons that Michal and I sat at the table and her father David joined the conversation. We sat and talked until the sun had set and David needed to leave for evening prayers.

One thing that struck me was how comfortable I felt speaking openly with David, in a way that I couldn't with my dad. I came away from that day awed by David's understanding, patience, and sage advice.

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When I was thirteen after a fight with my father, who discovered I had male friends (frowned upon in religious communities) and declared that no matchmaker would come near and I was ruining my reputation, it was David who assured me that platonic friendships with members of the opposite sex were normal, and that I could and would still get married in spite of it. When I found an advertisement for a journalist for *Mishpacha Magazine*, the largest international Jewish publication, it was David who encouraged me to try, even when I protested that I had no degree from Columbia and no prior experience. "It's the writer who propels the paper into success," he said to me. "Not the paper that propels the writer."

I applied. They liked my samples and hired me. My parents were frustrated, but David spoke to them on my behalf, and stressed that it was a religious publication knowing that they would find that reassuring. David intervened again later, when my job required me to attend galas and events that took place at night, after my curfew. I remember crying, this was after another argument with my father that ended badly, but David, in his calm, logical, manner, told me to stop being a drama queen. "Sarah," he said, "Your father loves you. His whole life he worked to provide for you, so that you could have what he did not have growing up." That sentence granted me perspective that remains with me until today, when my father and I disagree. I still think of David every time my father and I disagree. His guidance helped improve my relationship with my dad.

Throughout the years David became my mentor and guide. When I could not consult with my father I would consult with Michal's, and she would laugh that I preferred his company over hers. He was the one who supported my journalism career in a community that still pixelates or crops photos of females from its media. He, like he did with his daughter, encouraged me to take time to know myself before pursuing marriage. When journalism grew frustrating due to the censorship and restrictions I pursued a career in education, obtaining a degree in Secondary Education and working with kids at risk. David encouraged me all the way, and one of the last conversations we had was when I walked his family back home from ours, where they attended a holiday meal. During this walk, David expressed his pride in me that I had chosen a career to help others, especially children in need.

When I heard about the arrest I was numb. But Michal was crying on my shoulders, so I had to remain strong and support her, saving my tears for after she left. Over the past few months, I have watched her triple in weight gain. I watched her fall apart as her family fell apart, I watched her uncertainty and fear as she came to recognize that her father may be taken away from her and knowing that she could not depend upon her mother for support. She has also been trying to cope with the loss of her childhood home.

[REDACTED] I watch as other aspects of her life have come crumbling down. I know Michal very well, and I know that her well-being is dependent upon a positive turn in her life. I therefore beseech you to have mercy on David, if not in his merit, then for the sake of Michal and her siblings.

I trust that you will treat this matter with the utmost consideration and hope that you will see it fitting to be compassionate with David as he was and is with those around him.

Respectfully,
Sarah Buzaglo

[REDACTED]
Brooklyn, NY, 11229

Signature: 